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ABSTRACT

Research on the results of welfare-to-work programs is both encouraging and sobering. On the one hand, it provides evidence that states can effectively implement various work-oriented programs to encourage large percentages of the welfare caseload to prepare for and enter the labor market. These programs range from rather low-intensity programs aimed at moving recipients into jobs as quickly as possible, to more complex and intensive programs that may include assessment, counseling, and case management as well as education, training, and support services. A number of highly successful programs place a heavy emphasis on employment while providing an integrated set of education, training, and support services. On the other hand, research suggests it is difficult to achieve the multiple objectives established for welfare-to-work programs. None have been able to lift participants out of poverty. A strategy that is successful in increasing the employment and earnings of welfare recipients may not be successful in reducing welfare dependency or achieving cost savings to the government. Strategies aimed at promoting responsible behavior among teenage recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children have met with limited success. Continued research on states' programmatic initiatives and structural reforms will provide additional guidance to inform welfare policy and program implementation. (Appendixes include highlights of major research studies on welfare-to-work programs, and seven endnotes. Contains 21 references. (YLB)

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Research Findings on the Effectiveness of State Welfare-to-Work Programs

NATIONAL
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State
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Social Services
Policy Studies

ED 374 316

by Evelyn Ganzglass

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Executive Summary

The research on the results of welfare-to-work programs is both encouraging and sobering. On the one hand, it provides evidence that states can effectively implement various types of work-oriented programs to encourage large percentages of the welfare caseload to prepare for and enter the labor market. These programs range from rather low-intensity programs aimed at moving recipients into jobs as quickly as possible, to more complex and intensive programs that may include assessment, counseling, and case management as well as education, training, and support services to help clients obtain the skills they need to obtain higher paying jobs with career potential. A number of highly successful programs are beginning to provide lessons on which to develop further policy. These programs place a heavy emphasis on employment while providing an integrated set of education, training, and support services to help participants enhance their skills.

On the other hand, the research suggests that it is difficult to achieve the multiple objectives established for welfare-to-work programs. None of the programs have been able to lift participants out of poverty. Furthermore, a strategy that is successful in increasing the employment and earnings of welfare recipients may not be successful in reducing welfare dependency or achieving cost savings to the government. Similarly, a strategy that achieves cost savings may not be successful in achieving other welfare-to-work policy goals. Strategies that sometimes look promising in the short term do not always result in positive long-term impacts. Moreover, certain strategies such as investments in education and training, which require a heavy upfront investment in resources, may not result in a positive payback until several years after program completion.

Strategies aimed at promoting responsible behavior among teenage AFDC recipients have met with only limited success, at least in the short run. None of the programs studied were successful in reducing repeat pregnancies, and in the majority of cases, the young women served by these programs remained on welfare. States currently are experimenting with a variety of new policies to encourage welfare recipients to enhance their skills, go to work, postpone early childbearing, and improve their parenting practices. Although it is expected that these changes in the rules governing welfare programs will change "welfare as we know it," it is too early to judge whether the new rules will have the desired effect. Continued research on states' programmatic initiatives and structural reforms will provide additional guidance in the coming years to inform welfare policy and program implementation.

1.

Introduction

States are experimenting with a variety of new strategies for welfare recipients in order to enhance their skills, encourage them to go to work, postpone early childbearing, and improve their parenting practices. Unlike the welfare reforms of the 1980s, which focused on programmatic interventions to achieve these objectives, the current state reforms are also modifying the rules governing the welfare system. States are changing income disregards to remove disincentives to work. They are using incentives and sanctions to encourage welfare recipients to stay in or return to school and to postpone early childbearing. They are also strengthening the links between the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program and state child support enforcement efforts. Several states already are experimenting with time-limited welfare—one of the central themes of the administration's anticipated welfare reform proposals.

Although there appears to be a national consensus to "end welfare as we know it," there are philosophical disagreements about what strategies should be used to pursue to achieve this end. These different points of view are reflected in the various structural reforms being implemented by states under the waiver authority of Section 1115 of the Social Security Act. They also are reflected in the various policy assumptions and priorities influencing the structure and, to some extent, the mix of services being provided by states under the federally authorized and supported Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) Training program.

Moreover, these different perspectives are evident in the welfare reform proposals being offered at the national level. It is likely that the administration's welfare reform proposal will emphasize the same themes found in state initiatives and provide more incentives to work, increase benefits for the working poor, strengthen child support enforcement, and expand child care systems within the states. In contrast, the House Republican bill strengthens sanctions by imposing a cutoff of benefits for unwed mothers below age eighteen and a cap on benefit levels, regardless of the number of children a recipient has while on AFDC.

Most of the states' new welfare reforms have not been in place long enough to determine their effectiveness. Yet evaluations of previous state innovations can shed some light on what might be expected as a result of the changes. In addition, there is a considerable body of research on the impacts of various programmatic welfare-to-work strategies that can help inform the current policy debate.

This report summarizes the data on the characteristics of welfare recipients, their participation in the JOBS program, and the lessons learned from the study of current and past welfare-to-work and employment and training policies and programs that have

particular relevance to today's welfare reform discussions.¹ It summarizes what is known about:

- the implementation of the JOBS program;
- the impact of different welfare-to-work strategies, including those specifically targeted to teens;
- the results of various kinds of participation mandates; and
- the impact of benefit changes and other structural reforms.

Welfare Dynamics

The effectiveness of welfare-to-work policies and programs must be evaluated in terms of the added value that is attributable to these interventions. Consequently, to understand the difference various interventions make in people's lives, it is necessary to take into account the natural flow of people on and off welfare because of marriage, employment, and other reasons unrelated to any special intervention. It is also important to understand the characteristics of families that are dependent on welfare benefits.

Although welfare caseloads were relatively stable for many years, they have grown substantially over the last ten years, especially since 1989. Between 1989 and 1993, the average monthly caseload in the AFDC program rose from 3.8 million recipients to about 5 million recipients, an increase of almost 32 percent. Most of the families in the AFDC system do not remain on welfare for a long time, but a significant proportion of welfare families do become long-term dependents. Based on fiscal 1991 data, the median length of time on AFDC since the most recent opening of the case was twenty-two months; just over one-third of the families received support for one year or less and one-fifth received support for more than five years. In that same year, 40 percent of the families on AFDC had been on the welfare rolls before.

Welfare dependency is not concentrated among one age group. In fiscal 1993, the median age of adult recipients was 28.9 years for women and 34 years for men. Eight percent of the total AFDC female adult population was eleven to nineteen years of age, while 12 percent was forty years of age or older. However, research has documented that long-term welfare dependency is concentrated among recipients who do not complete high school and those who first receive welfare payments as teenagers. As a result, more than half of welfare spending goes to families headed by women who first gave birth as teens.

Among AFDC recipients in fiscal 1993, 69 percent of women and 49 percent of men were neither employed nor in school or training; only 6 percent of adult female recipients and 9 percent of adult male recipients were employed, earning an average monthly income of \$330.

The JOBS program was enacted in 1988. Yet its participation mandates affect only a small proportion of the caseload, and even fewer recipients participate in any kind of service intervention. Almost three-quarters of those exempt from registration are excused because they are caretakers of either an underage dependent child or an ill or incapacitated household member. Almost one in ten recipients is exempt because no training program is available in a particular location.

In fiscal 1993, only 43 percent of recipients were mandated to register for the JOBS program; of these, only 14 percent of women and 27 percent of men participated in some kind of employment and training program.

Implementation of the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program

Data on JOBS participation released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services indicate that, on average, 510,000 people participated in the program each month during fiscal 1992. Almost 40 percent of the participants were involved in program activities for fifteen hours or less per week, while nearly 30 percent was engaged in activities for twenty-one hours or more per week. The majority of clients (55 percent) were participating in some type of education and job training activity in fiscal 1992; of these, 24.5 percent was engaged in basic literacy and General Educational Development (GED) preparation activities and the remainder in either job training or higher education. Few JOBS participants were involved in worksite activities in fiscal 1992. Fewer than 4 percent of clients were enrolled in community work experience activities in an average month and less than 1 percent was enrolled in either on-the-job training or work supplementation.

These participation patterns may be driven by client needs. Or, as the authors of the JOBS implementation study suggest, the services provided may reflect the services available within communities more than the services identified through client assessment.² The study found that, at least in the states studied, even though a wide range of services potentially was available within the various program models being followed, the actual services available were more limited because of funding limitations and the program's dependency on other services providers such as JTPA and education agencies. For example, the report notes that education and training were emphasized more heavily than rapid reemployment in part because subsidies for educational services from other sources made them available to the JOBS program at low or no cost. The researchers also found weak linkages between the program and employers. This could reflect the program's lack of success in identifying on-the-job training and placement opportunities, its lack of attention to creating such opportunities, or both.

The JOBS implementation study also found that program models were further compromised because in some sites, many individuals who already were participating in an education or training program or were about to enter another training program enrolled in JOBS in order to obtain needed child care and other supportive services. According to the report, the availability of resources within JOBS and from other programs also influenced the zeal with which participation mandates were enforced. In some of the states studied, mandated participation rates were met simply by enrolling those who volunteered for the program. In other states, where participation was mandatory, insufficient funding resulted in some of the required caseload not receiving services.

Release of the first report of a national study on the impact of the JOBS program is expected late in the summer of 1994. This study, which is being conducted by the Manpower Development and Research Corporation (MDRC), will be based on the experience of seven nationally representative sites.

3.

Impacts of Various Programmatic Strategies

In their book *From Welfare to Work*, Judith Gueron and Edward Pauly compare the results of the following three types of welfare-to-work programs conducted by states since the 1980s:⁵

- large-scale, low-to-moderate cost programs that provide some short-term unpaid work experience and focus on getting a large percentage of the participants into jobs quickly;
- higher cost, smaller, more selective programs that generally involve volunteers from particular groups of AFDC recipients in subsidized or supported work and on-the-job training; and
- mixed-strategy programs, such as the JOBS program, which combine low-cost labor force attachment strategies for some groups and higher cost human capital development strategies for others.

During the 1990s, states have used a fourth strategy to move people from welfare to work. These structural reforms change income disregards and other rules governing welfare benefits to remove disincentives to work. The evaluation of New York's Child Assistance Program, summarized later in this report, is the only national study to date on the effectiveness of this strategy.

Low-Intensity, Broad-Coverage Programs

The research on low-intensity, broad-coverage programs provides evidence that states can effectively implement these programs and that such interventions produce consistent and sustained, but modest, increases in employment and earnings and reductions in welfare receipt of participants, resulting in relatively large welfare savings per dollar spent and a rapid payoff on the resources spent. However, the research also shows that these earnings gains were achieved because more people were working, not because of increases in earnings for those employed. Although welfare recipients achieved modest increases in income, many remained in poverty and on welfare because of relatively low-paying jobs.

The studies documented that encouraging or mandating participation in job search, unpaid work experience, and a mix of other relatively low-cost services resulted in different impacts for particular segments of the welfare population. The low-intensity approaches tried had different effects on achievement of the various goals of welfare-to-work programs. Programs that achieved welfare savings did not necessarily improve earnings and those that improved employment outcomes did not necessarily achieve welfare savings.

For the most part, the studies found that the programs did not help the most job-ready welfare recipients. Most of the welfare savings came from the most disadvantaged group and long-term welfare recipients on whom most of the income support resources were spent, even though the programs did not increase their employment experience or economic self-sufficiency. Clients in the middle group achieved the most consistent earnings gains.

A recently completed five-year followup of people in low-intensity, broad-coverage programs shows that participants did significantly better for three to four years after completion of the program. By the fifth year, those who did not receive services caught up. In other words, the programs achieved earnings gains and welfare savings by getting people to take jobs and leave the rolls more quickly than they would have done on their own. However, the programs did not reduce the number of people who were still on welfare five years after leaving the program.

Higher Cost, Selective Programs

Because the population served by the higher cost, selective voluntary programs may be more motivated, more likely to use services, and less burdened by child care needs and other barriers to participation, the impacts achieved by these programs cannot be compared directly with those achieved by the largely mandatory broad-coverage programs discussed above. The research provides evidence that these programs produced consistent and sustained increases in employment and earnings but relatively small welfare savings. Earning gains resulted more from improvements in the quality of jobs and increases in hourly wages than from increases in the number of people working. Except for supported work, the programs had little success with the most disadvantaged recipients, with many remaining in poverty and on welfare.

The National Supported Work Demonstration provided very disadvantaged recipients with highly structured, full-time, increasingly more demanding work experience paying approximately the minimum wage for up to a year or eighteen months. Close supervision and peer support were provided to improve basic work habits and skills.

The AFDC Homemaker-Home Health Aide Demonstration tested the feasibility of training AFDC recipients to assist functionally impaired people in their homes. The model called for four to eight weeks of formal training followed by up to one year of subsidized employment during which trainees remained on Medicaid and received work-related support services.

Mixed-Strategy Programs

Mixed strategy programs, which include state programs conducted under JOBS and several welfare-to work programs that preceded JOBS, are generally more complex and flexible than the simple program designs of the 1980s in which participants moved through a fixed sequence of activities, usually beginning with mandatory job search. These program designs place a greater emphasis on assessing service needs, offering choices, and using counseling and case management. For the most part, mixed-strategy

programs, like the earlier low-intensity, broad-coverage programs, are designed to involve a large proportion of the caseload.

The JOBS program implementation study found that JOBS program designs fell into three broad categories that generally describe the range of program designs included in mixed-strategy programs. They are:

- the "choice" model, in which services are driven solely by the assessed needs of the client;
- the "job readiness" model, in which job search is used as a labor market screen to move job-ready clients into jobs as quickly as possible and those who are not hired after job search are provided with education and training to prepare them further for a job; and
- the "educational screening" model, in which the initial screening determines whether an individual lacks minimal educational competencies and should be given an opportunity to participate in an educational program prior to participation in other program components.

The research to date on mixed-strategy programs, such as Florida's Project Independence, California's Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN), and San Diego's Saturation Work Initiative Model (SWIM), suggests that they achieve some improvement in job quality and relatively large earnings gains. Substantial welfare savings and success with the most disadvantaged also were achieved in SWIM, which included referral to education and training for those who did not find a job after job search and three months of unpaid work experience. In that program, earnings impacts were larger for heads of households of single- and two-parent AFDC families with fewer barriers to employment and shorter welfare histories; welfare impacts were larger for the most disadvantaged.

The recently released three-year impact evaluation of the California GAIN program, which started before JOBS and with only minor adjustments became the state's JOBS program, suggests that a more expensive and complex program than the earlier job-attachment programs can benefit both the individuals served and the public at large. The GAIN program design calls for referring participants to basic education, if it is determined that they need such services, without requiring an initial job search. Because of this emphasis, GAIN increased the number of hours in basic education and increased the attainment of a GED certificate among a large number of welfare recipients. However, these increases did not translate into increased achievement as measured on a test of literacy and mathematical problemsolving. Education gains were concentrated among those with relatively higher literacy levels, and test score gains were concentrated in sites where adult education programs were adapted to the special needs of welfare recipients.

Among the six counties studied, earnings impacts for single parents doubled between the first and second years of followup and increased another 24 percent between the second and third years, reaching \$1,414 per recipient in the experimental group for the three-year period. AFDC impacts for single parents grew by about 23 percent between years one and two but remained about the same in year three as in year two. Longer term followup data on an early cohort of GAIN participants suggest that

earnings impacts may continue to grow in future years, but welfare savings may gradually taper off. In several of the counties where supplementary data were collected, comparable earnings and welfare impacts were achieved by both single parents with children below age six and single parents with children above age six. Benefit-to-cost results generally were positive with the various subgroups served, though they were not as impressive for the heads of two-parent families.

GAIN produced earnings gains and welfare savings for program registrants deemed to be in need of basic education as well as for those not in need of these services, but not always for both groups in each county. However, lower earnings impacts among welfare recipients in need of basic education suggest that the strategy of assigning recipients to basic education as a first activity and letting them remain in basic education without monitoring their progress and requiring them to test labor market opportunities may not be as effective as other strategies.

Despite its promising results, thus far GAIN has had limited success in moving families out of poverty. Only 20 percent of those in the experimental group—just 3 percentage points more than those in the control group—achieved incomes above the poverty line from earnings, AFDC, and Food Stamps. About half of both groups received some AFDC payments during the three years and only one-fifth was both off AFDC and working.

The ongoing impact evaluation of the JOBS program⁴ is designed to provide more extensive information than is available from the current research on whether a welfare-to-work program with increased investments in education, training, and other skill-building services, as well as lower cost, less-intensive services, results in better jobs, greater reductions in poverty, and greater success with long-term recipients than do programs that offer mainly job search assistance and unpaid work experience. The first results of this evaluation of the JOBS program are not yet available. However, early results of both the GAIN and Project Independence studies look promising. At the three-year followup point, GAIN achieved increasing earnings gains and positive but stabilizing welfare savings. After one year, Project Independence achieved welfare savings and earnings impacts for some recipients.

Impact evaluations of programs funded under Title II-A of the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and the JOBSTART demonstration project, which was conducted within the JTPA system, provide some insight into the returns that may be expected from mixed-strategy programs that emphasize education and training. Unlike most welfare-to-work programs in which participation is required, JTPA is a voluntary program. JTPA programs provide a combination of job search, classroom and on-the-job training, basic skills instruction, placement services, paid work experience, and a variety of support services to economically disadvantaged youth and adults. Although JTPA is not targeted exclusively to welfare recipients, one of its primary goals is to reduce welfare dependency, and it serves a substantially larger percentage of welfare recipients than is represented in the JTPA-eligible population. In program year 1992, 27 percent of program trainees were AFDC recipients. No data are available on what percentage of these welfare recipients were participating in JTPA as part of their JOBS participation requirement and what percentage was participating voluntarily in a self-initiated activity.

The national JTPA study provides useful information on the differential impacts of the various program components offered to subgroups under the program.⁹ Overall, JTPA achieved modest and sustained earnings gains in the thirty months studied for adult participants that are similar in magnitude to those of the broad-coverage welfare-to-work programs. Yet these earnings gains did not lead to welfare savings. JTPA also had no significant positive impact on the earnings of out-of-school youth, regardless of the service strategy. JTPA increased the percentage of adult and female youth school dropouts who attained a high school diploma or GED certificate, but it had almost no significant effect on the receipt of AFDC or Food Stamps for either adults or out-of-school youth.

On-the-job training (OJT) increased the earnings of adult men and women as did other services, including job search and basic education. Earnings gains for the combined OJT-job search strategy subgroup were comparable to those of the higher cost, more selective welfare-to-work programs. However, classroom-based occupational training did not have a positive effect on earnings.

The JOBSTART program, modeled on the nonresidential Job Corps program, focused on improving the employment, earnings, and educational attainment of seriously disadvantaged, low-skill, young high school dropouts. The model had four central program components:

- basic academic skills instruction delivered through an individualized, self-paced curriculum;
- occupational training provided in a classroom setting, combining theory and hands-on experience to prepare participants for jobs in high-demand occupations;
- training-related support services, including needs-based and incentive payments tied to program performance; and
- job placement assistance.

Based on four years of followup data, JOBSTART led to a significant increase in receipt of a GED certificate and, to a much lesser extent, completion of high school and attainment of a high school diploma; some, though not statistically significant earnings gains in the third and fourth years; and generally no change in the youth's receipt of public assistance. The notable exception is that young women who were not mothers or not living with their children when they entered the program were significantly less likely to be on AFDC during the followup period than were those who did not participate in the program.

The Center for Employment and Training (CET) in San Jose, California, has produced substantially larger positive impacts than other sites in the JOBSTART demonstration and the Minority Female Single-Parent project. Although there is no conclusive evidence on why this program seems to be more successful than others, the program is characterized by:

- a clear organizational focus on employment as a program goal;
- little upfront screening of applicants;

- the provision of basic skills instruction within the context of vocational training, rather than the provision of such instruction in sequence;
- training in high-demand occupations;
- relatively intensive services provided during a short period;
- strong job placement efforts; and
- a high-wage labor market.

Some of these program characteristics are similar to those of the Riverside County GAIN program, which also produced larger and more consistent positive impacts than other sites included in the GAIN study.

Unpaid Work Experience and Job Search

Except for West Virginia, where unpaid work experience was a major ongoing program component, unpaid work experience was almost always operated on a small scale, for a low percentage of the eligible welfare population and for a three-month period because of a combination of program design decisions, staff opposition, administrative difficulties, and insufficient resources.

A separate analysis of the impact of the unpaid work experience component of welfare-to-work programs in San Diego I, Cook County, Illinois, and West Virginia found that unpaid work experience was feasible to operate at this relatively small scale and that work assignments generally were meaningful, were considered fair, and produced work of sufficient value to offset their cost.

However, the research suggests that program impacts were driven by job search services rather than by unpaid work experience. There is little evidence that unpaid work experience can lead to consistent employment and earning effects. Only one site had some positive effects for a limited time. From the client perspective, increased earnings and fringe benefits were sometimes greater than increased taxes and reduced welfare payments; in other cases, the net effect on recipients' income was negative. As a result, unpaid work experience did not lead to reductions in welfare receipt or welfare payments, though when combined with job search, it did result in modest to small overall reductions in welfare payments and sometimes in the number of people on welfare (San Diego I and Cook County). Although there were no consistent benefits of unpaid work experience for individuals, the benefits to taxpayers generally outweighed the costs. Programs that offered job search as the only service or as the first activity in a mixed strategy consistently produced greater welfare savings than other strategies studied.

In addition, the value of the work performed by clients contributed to the benefits of unpaid work experience to the taxpayer. These benefits ranged from \$260 to \$1,000 per program participant. Despite these benefits, the actual per participant costs to the administering agency ranged from \$700 to \$2,100 in 1993 dollars depending on the duration of the work experience, who was targeted, and whether work experience was offered alone or in conjunction with other activities. The annual cost per filled slot, including worksite development, client intake, assignment and monitoring, and support

services and work allowances for participants, ranged from approximately \$700 to \$8,200, with costs lowest in programs that operated on a relatively large scale.

The research suggests that the essential ingredients for running a large-scale program of unpaid work experience are:

- sufficient funding;
- strong staff commitment to the program;
- adequate worksite capacity;
- clearly articulated procedures for assigning clients to worksites, monitoring client participation, exempting clients who cannot work, and sanctioning clients who do not comply; and
- support or acceptance of the program by labor unions, welfare advocacy groups, and others in the community.

Programs Targeted to Teen Parents

Various employment and training programs, including Ohio's Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) program, have been directed to promoting responsible behavior among teenage AFDC applicants and recipients. The results to date are sobering. Nearly all of the programs studied have had trouble achieving high rates of attendance and none of them have been successful in reducing repeat pregnancies. The programs have had mixed success in achieving education and employment gains and improving parenting behavior among participants. In the majority of cases, the young women remained on welfare and were not able to achieve economic self-sufficiency. However, at least one study suggests that the long-term effects of such programs may be more positive than is suggested by the short-term results documented to date.

The Teenage Parent Demonstration project, which was conducted in three sites in Illinois and New Jersey, required pregnant and parenting teen AFDC recipients to stay in school, return to school if they had already dropped out, enroll in postsecondary education if they had completed high school or obtained a GED certificate, enroll in job training, or get a job after completing their education or training. The program achieved improvements in all of these areas as well as earnings gains. These earnings gains resulted in lower participation in the Food Stamps program and lower AFDC benefit levels, but did not lower AFDC participation rates. Impacts on living arrangements, child support, and pregnancies and births generally were negligible.

Project Redirection sought to enhance the educational, job-related, parenting, and life management skills of participants and delay further childbearing by linking participants to community services and providing a variety of mentoring and counseling support services. The program had mixed results. Five years after the program, participants had higher earnings and were less likely to be on welfare, but most remained in poverty and on welfare. Participants scored higher on a test of parenting skills than a comparable group of recipients who did not participate in the program, and participants' children showed higher cognitive skills and exhibited fewer behavioral problems than those of nonparticipants. The program had no impact on preventing subsequent pregnancies.

The Summer Training and Employment Program (STEP) provided fourteen- and fifteen-year-old, low-income, low-performing potential dropouts with two consecutive summers of paid remediation, life-skills instruction, and work experience through the JTPA system. One of its goals was to reduce teenage pregnancy. Although short-term impacts looked promising, later research found that the program had no long-term impact on the teens' sexual behavior or their educational and economic experiences.

The New Chance program, which was designed to promote self-sufficiency among young welfare mothers and improve the well-being of their children, provided comprehensive services to AFDC mothers ages sixteen to twenty-two who are high school dropouts and who gave birth during their teenage years and to their children. The program model provides case management, adult basic education and GED preparation, health and personal development instruction, training, and employment services to help them acquire the knowledge, decisionmaking abilities, and communication skills needed in adult life. New Chance also includes parenting education and child care services to foster the cognitive and social development of participants' children. The program is more intensive—requiring daily attendance—and of longer duration—eighteen months with up to a year of additional services—than the usual programs aimed at this group. However, a high level of absenteeism and early terminations resulted in many participants experiencing a briefer, less intensive, and less employment-focused program than had been planned.

Based on data collected eighteen months after individuals were randomly assigned to either the experimental or control group, program impacts are mixed. Although women in the experimental group were more likely to have attained a GED certificate, to have earned college credits, or to be enrolled in college, women in both the experimental and control groups were similar with regard to reading skills; levels of depression, stress, and drug use; and health. No positive effects were found regarding subsequent pregnancies, the use of contraception, employment, or childrearing behavior. In part, these results reflect the fact that women in the control group received similar, though somewhat more limited, services compared with those in the experimental group. However, the situation for both groups is poor. At eighteen months, 61 percent of the sample had neither obtained a GED nor a high school diploma; 65 percent were neither employed nor in an education or training program; and 82 percent were still on welfare.

The Young Unwed Fathers Pilot Project is attempting to improve the earning capacity and parenting skills and behavior of young fathers by providing education, training, counseling, and other ongoing support for an eighteen-month period, including support after job placement. Early research has found that attracting and enrolling young fathers, even in programs specifically designed for them, is difficult and resource-intensive, at least in the initial operating period. The research also documented that a lack of viable skills training options, lack of in-program financial support, and pressure to pay outstanding child support payments force fathers to take jobs before they improve their job-related skills sufficiently to improve their long-term employability. However, information reported by the fathers indicates that they have significant relationships with their children's mothers, that they take part in the lives of their children, and that they generally are not responsible for multiple births. The young fathers also reported spending significant amounts of money on their children, often over and above formal child support payments.

4.

State Experience in Implementing Participation Mandates

The ability of states to involve large percentages of a targeted caseload in services is important because it influences the program's impact on those who participate as well as those who do not. Different service components can only benefit clients if the clients actually participate in the program. Yet imposing a participation requirement as a condition of welfare receipt may discourage people from joining the welfare rolls, or it may encourage those already on welfare to seek a job or just leave welfare.

The broad-coverage 1980s style welfare-to-work programs, which usually mandated participation of AFDC applicants and recipients with school-age children, were able to involve between 38 percent and 65 percent of all those targeted in a specific employment-directed activity within a six- to twelve-month period after applying for welfare or registering for the program. However, to achieve these participation rates, the programs had to work with and screen a substantially larger proportion of the caseload because many people ended up not participating in these activities because they left welfare, were no longer eligible, or were deferred from participating. The San Diego SWIM program, which sought to achieve a 75 percent monthly participation goal among heads of single-parent and two-parent families, fell short of reaching this level but achieved high participation rates in all major activities by working with all clients. Because of this effort, about half of all enrollees were active in job search, unpaid work experience, part-time work, or education or training sometime during each month. SWIM involved approximately one in five participants in education and training, but many of these people and those in the control group initiated participation in such activities on their own.

Florida's Project Independence, which was the first program to require participation of AFDC recipients with children age three and older, achieved even higher levels of participation. Three-quarters of those mandated to participate attended program orientation. However, on average, program registrants spent less than a quarter of the time in program activities, with job search being the most prevalent activity. Seventy percent of those who did not attend orientation worked some time during the followup period and half was sanctioned.

The Teenage Demonstration project, which targeted teen recipients with young children, achieved very high participation rates. Participation rates were highest among those with higher basic skills, those enrolled in school at intake, those who did not have health problems, and those who lived with mothers not employed outside the home. Participation rates were lowest among school dropouts. These participation patterns were influenced, at least in part, by the kinds of services that were available in the community. For example, in the communities where this project was conducted, job training tended to be available only for high school graduates and for those with

reasonably strong basic skills. Adult education programs tended to be insensitive to the needs of teenage parents, which resulted in attendance problems.

In programs that provided a fixed sequence of services, participation was two to three times higher in the first service component than in subsequent components, suggesting that much of the impact of the program is attributable to that service component rather than to the entire program. The same pattern of fall-off among service components is also evident in the GAIN program. Although overall participation rates ranged from 51 percent to 63 percent in five of the six counties studied by MDRC, only 43 percent of those mandated to participate actually did so in the one county where assignment to case managers was delayed for as much as several months after orientation in order to reduce the size of the caseload.

For those individuals who did participate in any GAIN activity, job search, basic education, and self-initiated programs were the most heavily used activities. The participation patterns in these service components varied greatly among sites, even though the program emphasizes large-scale, mandatory participation in basic education for those who need it in addition to other services. During the period covered by the MDRC study, 65 percent of those served by GAIN needed basic skills instruction and 41 percent of this group actually received such instruction. The large volume of basic skills instruction was paid for through the adult education system, which in California receives funding based on enrollment.

5.

Impact of Structural Reforms

The evaluation of the New York State Child Assistance Program (CAP) is the only national study to date on the impact that changes in income disregards and links between AFDC and the child support system can have on the self-sufficiency of recipient families. Because many state reforms involve regulatory changes such as these, the results of this demonstration are particularly important.

Under CAP, the AFDC grant level is based on the number of children who are members of the AFDC caseload and who are covered by a court order for child support. CAP families also remain eligible for benefits until their incomes reach 150 percent of the poverty level.

CAP increased clients' earnings by 27 percent; support orders by 25 percent; and total income by 4 percent, or an average of \$41 per month, over the first two years of participation. The earnings impact tended to level off during the second year. The program also resulted in small cost savings to the government. Yet CAP had no impact on the receipt of public assistance or the amount received in support payments during this period, probably because of the low amounts of the new support orders and the low income of the absent fathers. If fathers' incomes improved, so would the value of the child support orders.⁶

CAP achieved percentage gains in client earnings that equaled or surpassed percentage gains in earnings documented in other welfare-to-work programs during the same period. It did not generate reductions in assistance payments as quickly as most employment and training programs. Yet because its administrative costs are relatively low, CAP paid for itself more quickly.

Ohio's LEAP program uses financial incentives and penalties, case management, and support services to promote school attendance of pregnant and custodial teen parents below twenty years of age. LEAP provides a \$62 bonus on top of the average \$274 grant for a teen who attends school regularly and a like grant deduction for a teen who does not attend school regularly. LEAP achieved a 10 percent increase in continuous school enrollment and a 13 percent increase in the rate at which teen dropouts returned to school during the year after they became eligible for LEAP. However, no data are yet available on whether increased school attendance resulted in increased high school completion or whether increased school attendance eventually will result in increased employment and earnings and reduced welfare receipt.

6.

Conclusions

The review of the research literature on welfare-to-work programs is instructive. Although the evidence is encouraging, at the same time it confirms once more that there is no magic formula to solve intractable problems such as poverty and long-term welfare dependency. The evaluation literature also suggests that it is unwise to jump to rapid conclusions about what works and what does not. Strategies that sometimes look promising in the short term do not always result in positive long-term impacts. Moreover, certain strategies such as investments in education and training, which require a heavy upfront investment of resources, may not result in a positive payback until several years after program completion. A strategy that is successful in increasing the employment and earnings of AFDC recipients may not be successful in reducing welfare dependency or achieving cost savings to the government. Similarly, a strategy that achieves cost savings may not be successful in achieving other welfare-to-work policy goals.

Studies have shown that implementation details and the overall message conveyed by the program count. Impact evaluation results deal with averages and there often are wide variations in performance among sites. These variations are starting to point to potential guidelines for designing successful strategies. The consistent success of the JOBS program in Riverside County, California, is noteworthy, and its particular combination of program features and circumstances may provide lessons on which to build. The Riverside County program provides participants with a direct link to employers through extensive job development efforts, and it conveys a strong message about the importance and value of work and people's potential to succeed. The program combines a focus on education and getting recipients into jobs quickly, while paying serious attention to enforcing participation mandates. Similarly, the success of the Center for Employment and Training (CET) and some of the findings from the GAIN evaluation suggest that the best way to structure remedial education programs may be to integrate basic education taught in context with job training, rather than to refer people to basic education instruction before helping them obtain a job or participate in job training activities.

More research is needed to followup on these important leads on what may constitute successful practice. What is it about the Riverside and CET programs that set them apart from the others? Can these effects be replicated and, if so, how? What can be learned about the characteristics of effective job search and on-the-job training programs? Research is underway to further determine the impact of JOBS. The first results of this research are expected to be available during the coming year. This study as well as studies of the effectiveness of the various structural reforms of the welfare

system currently being implemented within states will provide additional lessons for welfare reform policymaking and implementation.

Appendix: Highlights of Major Research Studies on Welfare-to-Work Programs

Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program

Program Description. The Rockefeller Institute of Government of the State University of New York is conducting a three-year study of the implementation of the JOBS program in ten states (Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Texas). The methodology employed in this study is field research in which a network of policy analysts use a common instrument to collect and analyze information and a common format to report their assessment of the states' implementation efforts. The first round of research conducted soon after the October 1990 implementation date examined the states' choices in designing, managing, and funding the JOBS program. The second round, conducted during the summer of 1991, examined the efforts of local agencies and frontline workers to implement the program. This study was conducted in a metropolitan area, a mid-sized city, and a small rural community within each of the ten states, except in Minnesota.

Research Findings. The researchers found that the design of the JOBS program was more complex and flexible than the simple program designs of the 1980s in which participants moved through a fixed sequence of activities, usually beginning with mandatory job search. The JOBS program designs placed a greater emphasis on assessing service needs, offering choices, and using counseling and case management. The programs studied fell into three broad categories: the "choice" model, in which the services provided are driven solely by the assessed needs of the clients; the "job-readiness screening" model, which uses an initial assessment to separate individuals into a job-ready track designed to move individuals quickly into employment and an education and training track for those with greater barriers to immediate employment; and the "educational screening" model, in which the initial screening determines whether an individual lacks minimum educational competencies and should be given an opportunity to attend an educational program prior to participation in other program components.

The researchers found that there was a considerable difference between the program design and the program that operated within communities. Although a wide range of services potentially was available within the various program models being followed, the actual services available were more limited because of the JOBS program's dependency on the provision of services through other programs. The researchers concluded that the states studied emphasized education and training more than moving people rapidly into employment. In part this was because educational services, which were subsidized by funds from other sources, were free or relatively inexpensive to JOBS. They also found that as a result of the constrained availability of services, service strategies were driven less by the needs identified through client assessment, as suggested by the program models, and more by the services that actually were available. The program models were further compromised by the fact that in some sites, many individuals became JOBS participants because they already were participating in an education or training program but needed the child care and other supportive

services that were available through JOBS. In other cases, individuals who were about to enroll in another training program were referred to JOBS for supportive services before beginning their activity. For example, this was the case with Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) applicants in Texas.

The researchers found that the funding level was among the most important factors influencing the course of JOBS implementation. The availability of resources influenced both the services provided and the zeal with which participation mandates were enforced. In Tennessee mandated participation rates were met solely by serving volunteers, and some other states also drew heavily on volunteers. In other states, in which participation was mandated, insufficient funding resulted in some of the required caseload not receiving services.

State funding for JOBS varied widely among states, reflecting severe budget constraints at the state level during the period of the study. In all the states studied, resources from other programs, especially JTPA and education agencies, supplemented JOBS resources to varying degrees. Most states used JOBS funds to finance job-readiness training, which was delivered mostly inhouse by the JOBS agency, and adult education services. JOBS funds also were used to support job search activities, though to a lesser extent. Still fewer sites used JOBS funds to support job-skills training, on-the-job training, or work experience or work supplementation. Skills training was concentrated in service sector occupations, especially in the clerical and health care fields. Sites focused little attention on the direct creation of job opportunities for JOBS participants through on-the-job training and job development and placement. For the most part, linkages with employers were not well-developed.

In all the study states, the welfare agency was responsible for JOBS orientation and for sanctioning participants. The welfare agency's role in arranging for child care varied among the states, and other case management functions usually were performed by the agency responsible for arranging JOBS services. Because of contracting out and inhouse capacity in some areas developed through the Work Incentive (WIN) demonstration programs, most local welfare agencies made few staffing changes to meet their JOBS responsibilities.

In most of the states studied, the welfare agency transferred primary responsibility for operating some or all of the JOBS program to another agency through either a state-level agreement or a contracting decision at the local level. The JTPA system, education agencies, the public employment service, and local nonprofit and for-profit agencies all provided services. In Michigan, New York, and Oklahoma, state and local welfare agencies maintained full responsibility for operating the program inhouse.

Generally, local sites created a limited array of services exclusively for JOBS participants. Large cities and sites that had experience operating welfare-to-work programs prior to JOBS implementation, operated more programs specifically tailored to the needs of JOBS participants. Where there were formal interagency agreements between JOBS and JTPA, sites in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee mainstreamed a larger proportion of their JOBS participants through the JTPA system than the other states. The "twenty-hour rule," which requires that, on average, JOBS participants be engaged in activities for at least twenty hours per week in order for them to be counted toward meeting program participation rates, proved to be the most

troublesome to rural areas and sites where services were delivered through other programs.

Generally, JOBS administrators at the state and local levels believed that they had adequate child care services to address the needs of the number of welfare recipients necessary to meet the 7 percent JOBS participation requirement for 1990 and 1991. The major gap in services identified by several sites was care for infants and toddlers. At the time of the study, however, one state had to restrict access to the JOBS program and limit access to child care services for non-AFDC families because of limited child care funds.

The researchers point out that at the time of the study, many participants still were at the assessment and employability planning stage and therefore needed less child care than when they began work or training. Many of the programs were serving volunteers who may have already secured child care but were enrolling in JOBS to obtain payments for child care and other employment-related expenses. In addition, because programs had to serve only 7 percent of the eligible caseload, they may have been selecting those recipients with fewer child care needs to reduce the drain on resources. Furthermore, though child care was available, arranging transportation for participants to access this child care often was a problem. Finally, sites may have been relying on informal care arrangements. One of the issues uncovered in several sites was that JOBS was paying more for child care than was JTPA. As a result, JOBS potentially could restrict the availability of child care under JTPA, thereby interfering with JTPA's ability to serve JOBS participants.

Many of the sites studied placed a heavy emphasis on formal and regulated child care services, though the researchers suggest that the study may not have captured the extent to which informal care was being used, and the sites preserved parent choice in the selection of caregivers. A number of states and sites were increasing parent education about child care through information and referral services and the use of child care management agencies.

California's Greater Avenues for Independence Program

Program Description. The evaluation of California's Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) program provides important information on JOBS because GAIN is the country's largest JOBS program. Moreover, the GAIN study was undertaken March 1988 to June 1990, before massive budget cuts were implemented and when the program included a mix of serious mandates and extensive education and training services.

GAIN, which was established in 1985 and later on became California's JOBS program, mandated the participation of AFDC applicants and recipients with children three years of age and older in education, training, and/or work activities as a condition of receiving benefits. The program broke new ground by emphasizing large-scale, mandatory participation in basic education for those deemed to need it in addition to job search, training, and unpaid work experience, which were the focus of most welfare employment programs in the 1980s. The program's key feature is that it uses the education and basic skill levels of welfare recipients to direct them into one of two treatment streams. The premise was that many welfare recipients, especially long-term

recipients who account for the bulk of welfare spending, have inadequate basic skills for obtaining and keeping jobs, especially jobs that pay enough to enable them to leave welfare.

Those who do not have a General Educational Development (GED) certificate or a high school diploma, or who fail to achieve a minimum score of at least 215 on both a reading test and a mathematics test developed by the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), or who are not proficient in English are defined as "in need of basic education" and are required to attend a basic education program. These programs include Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes that focus on reading and mathematics, preparation for the GED test, and instruction in English as a Second Language (ESL). During the study period, 65 percent of those served by GAIN were deemed to be in need of basic education.

Recipients deemed to be in need of education may choose to participate in job search first, but if they do not find a job, they must then participate in a basic education program. Other registrants, who are determined not to need basic education, usually must participate in job search first and if they do not find a job, must undergo an employability assessment designed to help them choose among skill training, vocationally oriented postsecondary education, on-the-job training, or unpaid work experience as their next activity. Registrants who do not participate in their assigned activities are subject to a sanction in the form of a reduction in their welfare grant.

Research Findings. Based on three years of followup data, the study showed the following. GAIN produced notable and increasing earnings gains and welfare savings, especially for single heads of household but also for heads of two-parent families. Averaged across the six counties in the study, earnings impacts for single parents doubled between the first and second years of followup and increased another 24 percent between the second and third years, reaching \$1,414 per participant in the experimental group for the three-year period. Longer term followup data on an early cohort of GAIN participants suggest that earnings impacts may continue to grow in future years. Some of the counties achieved these earnings gains by increasing the rate and duration of employment, while others helped people get better-paying jobs.

Across the six counties, GAIN increased the rate of employment among single parents in the experimental group six percentage points. However, two-thirds of both the experimentals and controls did not work during year three, and almost half of them never worked during the entire three-year period. Close to two-thirds of the experimentals who were not working were not looking for work because of health and other reasons, including participation in school or training.

AFDC impacts for single parents grew by about 23 percent between years one and two but remained about the same in year three as in year two. Data on the early cohort of GAIN participants suggest that the gradual tapering off of these welfare effects will continue in the future.

These impacts varied substantially among counties, with some counties having greater success on some measures than others and success with either more or less disadvantaged subgroups of AFDC recipients. However, supplementary data collected in three counties suggest that GAIN achieved generally comparable earnings and welfare impacts for single parents with children below age six and single parents with

children above age six. Because of the generally positive but mixed results, MDRC researchers suggest that targeting JOBS to a particular segment of the welfare caseload such as teen parents may not be as effective as a more broadly focused strategy that attempts to serve a wider variety of AFDC subgroups.

When earnings gains are compared with welfare reductions and other losses over the five-year period after GAIN orientation, on average, welfare recipients were \$923 better off financially as a result of their participation in the program; net benefits were recorded as high as \$1,900 per experimental in Riverside. Government obtained a positive financial return on the program in three counties and a negative return in three counties. The return was exceptionally high in Riverside, with a \$2.84 benefit for every net dollar invested. Benefit-to-cost results were positive but not as impressive for heads of two-parent families.

Overall, however, GAIN had limited success in moving families out of poverty. Only 20 percent of the experimentals—just 3 percent more than the controls—achieved incomes from earnings, AFDC, and Food Stamps above the poverty line. About 50 percent of both groups received some AFDC payments during the three years and only 20 percent was both off AFDC and working.

GAIN produced earnings gains and welfare savings for program registrants deemed to be in need of basic education as well as for those not in need of these services, but not always for both groups in each county. However, lower earnings impacts among welfare recipients in need of basic education suggest that the strategy of assigning recipients to basic education as a first activity and letting them remain in basic education without monitoring their progress and requiring them to test labor market opportunities may not be as effective as other strategies. A separate study of the provision of basic education services under the GAIN program found that it is feasible to provide basic education services to large numbers of welfare recipients. GAIN increased the number of hours in basic education and increased the attainment of a GED certificate among welfare recipients. However, only welfare recipients in San Diego County experienced increases in educational achievement as measured on a test of literacy and mathematical problemsolving (Test of Applied Literacy Skills). Education gains were concentrated among individuals with relatively high literacy levels and test score gains were concentrated in Tulare County, which made special efforts to adapt existing adult education programs to the special needs of welfare recipients.

A special study on the effect of caseload size on program impacts suggests that reducing caseload sizes substantially below 100 per case manager does not improve program success. Therefore, keeping caseload sizes at a ratio of about 100-to-1 will not jeopardize program effectiveness.

Despite the mixed pattern of success across the six counties, Riverside County has consistently outperformed the other counties at each stage of the GAIN study. The GAIN program operated in this county provides participants with a direct link to employers through extensive job development efforts and the opportunity and incentive to apply what they learn in GAIN in the labor market. The program conveys a strong message about the importance and value of work and people's potential to succeed. Staff have high expectations of participants and concentrate on getting people into jobs quickly. Researchers speculate that the combination of these practices, coupled with a

strong commitment to, and adequate resources for, serving all mandatory registrants, use of GAIN's mechanisms to enforce participation mandates, and a more equal use of job search and education activities for registrants deemed to need education may be the reason for Riverside's success.

San Diego's Saturation Work Initiative Model

Program Description. The Saturation Work Initiative Model (SWIM), operated in San Diego County, California, from 1985 to 1987, also anticipated some of the provisions of the JOBS program. SWIM sought to change the nature of welfare by imposing a requirement to participate in employment-promoting activities as a condition of receiving AFDC. It also sought to maximize participation in these activities among heads of single-parent (mostly female) families without preschool-age children and heads of two-parent families (mostly male) by setting a monthly participation goal of 75 percent of all enrollees and requiring that individuals participate on an ongoing basis as long as they remained on AFDC. In addition, services included referral to education and training programs for those who did not find regular employment after participation in a two-week job search workshop and three months of unpaid work experience. Individuals who did not participate could be sanctioned with a partial, temporary AFDC grant reduction.

Research Findings. Based on five years of followup data, key findings include the following. SWIM achieved high participation rates in all major activities, with approximately half of all enrollees active in job search, community work experience, education, or training, or part-time work at least sometime during each month. Although the goal of involving 75 percent of the caseload in activities was not achieved, the researchers concluded that the 50 percent rate was the highest that could be achieved given the dynamic nature of the population and the program rules. To achieve this participation rate, staff had to work with all clients, not just those who eventually participated in the program.

SWIM increased earnings over a five-year period by 15 percent (about \$2,076) for single heads of household and by 5 percent (about \$1,060) for heads of household of two-parent families. The differences between those who participated in the program and those who did not peaked by the second year of followup and narrowed significantly so that by the end of the five-year followup period, there was no real difference between the two. This narrowing is mostly a result of the members of the control group catching up with the experimental group, but some of it also may be due to the fact that SWIM was only a two-year demonstration project and therefore people in the SWIM control group became eligible for GAIN and received mandatory welfare-to-work services beginning in the third year of the followup period.

Significant earnings impacts tended to be larger for AFDC and AFDC-UP (Unemployed Parent) recipients with fewer barriers to employment and AFDC recipients with shorter welfare histories. Welfare impacts generally were evenly distributed, but larger for the most disadvantaged AFDC-UP recipients.

Those receiving services found jobs more quickly over the five-year followup period than those who did not participate, but the rate of pay for these jobs was similar

for the two groups. Family income was not increased because any earnings gains from employment were offset by reductions in welfare income.

Despite the fact that impacts narrowed over time, SWIM achieved welfare savings of about \$2,000 per person over the five-year period—more than twice the program's net cost of about \$900 per experimental—because it moved people off welfare and into employment more quickly. For every dollar spent by the government, SWIM produced budget savings of least \$2.30 per single head of household studied and \$2.40 per two-parent head of household.

The proportion of people remaining unemployed and on welfare at the end of five years was the same for the experimental and control groups despite the emphasis on conditioning receipt of AFDC benefits on program participation, decreasing receipt of AFDC payments, and achieving welfare savings.

Florida's Project Independence

Program Description. Project Independence, which began operation in 1987 and later became the state's JOBS program, was one of the first programs to require participation of AFDC recipients with children age three and older. During the time of the study (July 1990 through August 1991), the project model emphasized immediate entry into the labor market for the majority of participants using relatively low-cost job placement services while still providing considerable amounts of education and training to those deemed nonjob-ready. The services offered were the same for those recipients with preschool-age children and those with older children. At the time of orientation, applicants and recipients were divided into two service tracks based on their educational attainment level and recent employment history. Job-ready participants were those who had completed at least tenth grade or had been employed in at least twelve of the last thirty-six months. (The nonjob-readiness criteria were broadened in October 1991 after the period of the study to include those who did not have a high school diploma or GED certificate, or who had worked fewer than twelve of the last twenty-four months.) These participants were required to participate in an initial job-search component that required participants to contact at least twelve employers to apply for a job. Those who did not find a job were then assigned to a two- to three-week job club to learn job search skills. Those remaining unemployed after this component usually were referred for a formal assessment, leading to development of an employability plan, and assigned to education or training activities provided within the community.

Nonjob-ready participants received a formal assessment and were then referred to basic education or training activities. Support services, including child care, tuition assistance for training or community college classes, transportation, and tools and uniforms, were provided. In January 1991, child care services became restricted because of budget cuts. Individuals mandated to participate in Project Independence could be excused if needed child care could not be provided.

Research Findings. Project Independence successfully implemented its participation mandate. Three-quarters of those mandated to participate in the program attended program orientation; others found jobs on their own (70 percent of those who did not attend orientation were employed sometime during the followup period), or they were subject to a reduction in the grant payment (about half of those who did not attend

orientation). A little more than half of these "mandatory" recipients participated in job search, education, and training, with job search being the most common activity (42 percent of those who attended orientation). Participants in education and training activities tended to spend about three to six months in these activities. However, on average, program registrants spent less than one-quarter of the time in program activities. Sixty percent of those who attended orientation but did not participate further in Project Independence were also employed at some point during the followup period. More than half of those referred to Project Independence thought that the participation mandate was fair.

At the end of the first year of followup, both labor market and AFDC effects were positive, if not dramatic. The program decreased the first-year AFDC payments for those in the program by an average of 7 percent and reduced the percentage of the mandatory caseload on AFDC from 69 percent to just over 64 percent. The program produced relatively large increases in first-year earnings and a reduction in first-year AFDC payments for those who had previously received AFDC for two years or more. The program produced reductions in first-year AFDC payments for first-time applicants and for applicants and recipients who had previously received AFDC for less than two years, but it did not produce first-year earnings impacts for these two groups. It also produced first-year earnings gains averaging \$157 per person referred to the program. These earnings gains were concentrated among the "job-ready," who by design were placed in job search as the first program activity, and among single parents whose children were six years of age and older. AFDC savings were achieved for parents with and without preschool-age children.

Eighteen-month followup data on a proportion of the participants studied showed larger impacts than at one year. These results and those obtained through other studies suggest that program results may increase over time, especially for those engaged in education and training activities. The final report of Project Independence will be issued in late 1994.

Ohio's Learning, Earning and Parenting Program

Program Description. Ohio's Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) program is one of several state initiatives to improve school attendance and school completion among teen parents through the JOBS program. LEAP uses financial incentives and penalties, case management, and support services such as transportation and child care to promote school attendance among pregnant and parenting teenagers on welfare. LEAP provides a \$62 bonus on top of the average \$274 grant for a teen who attends school regularly. The grant is reduced by the same amount if a teen does not attend regularly. Thus, there is a \$124 difference between the grant amount received by a teen attending school and one who is not. LEAP relied on available education services within the communities served.

The estimated direct costs of the program, including case management, support services, and incentives but excluding increased school costs, was \$330 per participant. During the eighteen-month period in which research was conducted, 93 percent of the teen mothers were scheduled for bonuses and/or sanctions.

Research Findings. Interim findings include the following. LEAP prevented some in-school teens from dropping out and brought some dropouts back to school. In-school teens experienced a 10 percent increase in continuous school enrollment during the year after they became eligible for LEAP. In-school youth also improved their school attendance. For teen dropouts, there was a 13 percent increase in the rate at which they returned to school or entered adult education programs. Yet more than half of the dropouts never returned to school in the first year.

Early evidence indicates that LEAP may produce significant increases in high school graduation and GED receipt, but it is too early to know whether these educational gains will translate into improved labor market performance and reduced welfare receipt. For the 13 percent of teens (mostly teens who had been out of school for more than a year) who qualified for four or more sanctions and no bonuses, LEAP produced no clear benefits and put their children at further risk.

Teenage Parent Demonstration

Program Description. The Teenage Parent Demonstration paralleled the provisions and requirements for custodial teenage parents contained in the Family Support Act and operated in three sites in Illinois (south side of Chicago) and New Jersey (Camden and Newark) from late 1987 through mid-1991 under grants from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Under the demonstration, pregnant and parenting teens were required to stay in school, if they already were attending school; return to high school or an adult education program if they already had dropped out of school; enroll in postsecondary education, if they already had obtained a high school diploma or GED certificate; enroll in an appropriate skill training program as an alternative to, or after completing, school; or seek employment as an alternative to, or after completing, education and/or training. Case management, child care assistance, transportation assistance, and counseling were provided. Reductions in AFDC grants were imposed as sanctions for noncompliance.

In the demonstration sites, all teenage mothers who had only one child and were receiving AFDC for the first time were required to attend an intake session. During the demonstration period, almost 6,000 teenage mothers joined the welfare rolls in these sites and nearly 90 percent attended intake and enrolled in the demonstration. Half were selected at random to participate in the demonstration; the remainder became part of the control group receiving regular AFDC services.

Of those assigned to enhanced services, more than 80 percent completed an extensive assessment and developed an employability plan, and 70 percent engaged in at least one of three major activities: school (47 percent), job training (29 percent), or employment (33 percent). Participation in program activities was highest among those with higher basic skills, those who were enrolled in school at intake, those who did not have health problems, those who were black, and/or those who lived with mothers not employed outside the home. Participation was lowest among school dropouts who would have been mandatory participants under the JOBS program. In part, these participation patterns reflect the availability of education and training opportunities found within the communities at the time of the demonstration. Job training tended to be available only for high school graduates and those with reasonably strong basic

skills. Adult education programs tended to be insensitive to the problems faced by teenage parents, particularly their lack of interest in noncontextual learning. About 80 percent of participants had at least one spell of inactivity; 25 percent had multiple spells. Close to two-thirds of participants were threatened with sanction for noncompliance and one-third was sanctioned. Early assignment to a case manager, flexible scheduling, the provision of on-site child care, and group meetings helped promote participation.

Research Findings. Thirty months after intake into the program, program impacts were as follows. Participation in school increased 12 percentage points from 29 percent to 41 percent, job training increased 4 percentage points from 23 percent to 27 percent, and/or employment increased 5 percentage points from 43 percent to 48 percent. For teen dropouts, there was a 13 percent increase in the rate at which they returned to school or entered adult education programs.

During any month, one-quarter to one-third of participants were active in education, job training, or employment, compared with 19 percent to 29 percent of those in the regular service group. Over the twenty-four months after intake, this amounted to a 28 percent increase in activity for the enhanced service group over the regular service group. Participation impacts on school attendance were greatest among younger mothers with low basic skills and no high school diploma. Impacts on participation in job training were especially large for older youth and those with higher basic skills. Impacts on all three activities were highest among Hispanics.

Higher employment levels among those receiving enhanced service levels resulted in an average \$23 monthly earnings gain. Earnings gains contributed to lower participation rates in Food Stamps but not lower average food stamp benefit amounts. Earnings gains also resulted in lower AFDC benefit levels, but not lower AFDC participation rates. Eighty percent of those who obtained employment escaped poverty, but only 2 percent of others participating in the program did so. Overall impacts on living arrangements, child support, and pregnancies and births were negligible, but a few notable results were achieved in some of the sites.

Project Redirection

Program Description. Project Redirection sought to enhance the educational, job-related, parenting, and life-management skills and delay further childbearing of teenagers who were seventeen or younger, lacked a high school diploma or equivalency degree, and were either receiving or eligible to receive AFDC. The program linked participants with existing community services, paired participants with women mentors, and provided workshops, peer group sessions, and individual counseling to develop an individual participant plan.

The evaluation covers programs that operated from 1980 through December 1982 in a Puerto Rican community in Boston, a black community in Harlem, a Mexican American community in Phoenix, and a racially mixed community in Riverside, California. Unlike other MDRC studies, which used a random-assignment methodology, this study used a quasi-experimental design in which the experience of program participants was compared with that of similar teens in other communities with similar characteristics.

Research Findings. The evaluation found that at the five-year point, participants were working more hours per week and had higher earnings; were less likely to be receiving welfare; and scored higher on a widely used measure of the home environment as it relates to child development. Their children showed better cognitive skills, as measured by a test of vocabulary knowledge, and exhibited fewer behavioral problems. However, at the five-year point, there was no difference in the total household income of the two groups. Moreover, a high percentage of the women in both groups, who by then were in their early twenties, were still receiving AFDC and only a minority were working for pay.

The program appears to have had its greatest success with those teens who faced the greatest obstacles to self-sufficiency, those who were dropouts at the time of enrollment, and in the areas in which the young women were most interested, namely parenting and employability instruction. The program was least successful in the areas of education and family planning, areas that participants were less likely to say they enjoyed or found helpful. The researchers suggest that the success of the parenting component may have led to a reduced interest in preventing future pregnancies.

Although a significantly larger percentage (56 percent compared with 49 percent) of participants were either enrolled in school or had completed high school or obtained a GED after one year and the percentage of participants obtaining a high school diploma or GED certificate increased over the five-year period, there was no difference in the educational attainment of the two groups after either two or five years. During the first year, participants had fewer repeat pregnancies, but the difference between the two groups was no longer statistically significant by the second year. At the five-year point, both groups had an average of three pregnancies, with the average number of live births actually higher among participants than among the comparison group.

This project is notable for the turnaround in findings between the two-year and five-year followup periods. The researchers suggest that, in part, this may be because the two-year study focused on educational and pregnancy outcomes, while the five-year study was able to capture improvements in child development outcomes because the children were older as well as positive employment outcomes because participants, too, had aged and were more likely to be working. However, despite the positive effects of participation in Project Redirection, the interventions were not enough to help participants escape poverty. At the five-year point, the majority of participants were not working and the majority had received AFDC at some point during the previous twelve months.

Summer Training and Employment Program (STEP)

Program Description. The Summer Training and Employment Program (STEP) was targeted to fourteen- and fifteen-year-old potential dropouts who had low incomes and who performed below grade level in either reading or math. The model offered youth two consecutive summers of paid remediation, life-skills instruction, and work experience. Each youth's time was divided equally between work experience and remediation and life-skills instruction, which included a component on responsible social and sexual behavior. Minimal contact was maintained with the youth during the intervening

school year. The demonstration project operated in five cities between the summer of 1985 and the summer of 1988.

Research Findings. Although early reports documented that the relatively inexpensive STEP intervention could improve participants' reading and math scores and knowledge of life skills, a subsequent evaluation of the program's long-term impact (two to three years after the program) found that once the program ended, program impacts rapidly disappeared. Although participants continued to be more familiar with birth control methods than did youth in the control group, there was no long-term impact on their sexual behaviors or their educational and economic experiences.

New Chance

Program Description. The New Chance program was designed to promote self-sufficiency among young welfare mothers and improve the well-being of their children. The program provided comprehensive services to AFDC mothers ages sixteen to twenty-two who are high school dropouts and who gave birth during their teenage years and to their children. The program provided case management; adult basic education and GED preparation; health and personal development instruction; training and employment services to help participants acquire the knowledge, decisionmaking abilities, and communication skills needed in adult life; parenting education and child case services to foster cognitive and social development of participants' children; and pediatric health services. Daily attendance was required and services were provided for up to eighteen months, with followup case management services available for up to an additional year. Program activities were scheduled twenty to thirty hours per week. The program was operated by a variety of community-based and educational organizations in sixteen sites in ten states.

Research Findings. Although agencies were able to offer the intensive level of services required by the program design, a high level of absenteeism and early terminations resulted in many participants experiencing a briefer, less intensive, and less employment-focused program than had been planned. One-quarter of enrollees participated in New Chance activities 100 hours or less and another one-quarter participated 500 hours or more. Although members of the control group participated in many of the same services, especially education, as did members of the experimental group, those in the experimental group averaged nearly twice as many weeks in an education program and were three times as likely to participate in parenting, family planning, and health education classes than were those in the control group. Program costs were \$6,453 plus \$2,573 for child care per experimental.

Based on data collected after eighteen months since assignment to either the experimental or control group, the program had a positive effect on attainment of a GED certificate, and to a lesser extent, on enrollment in college and earning of college credits. However, the program did not increase reading skills, improve participants' health, or reduce participants' stress or drug use. It also did not have a positive effect on employment, the use of contraception, subsequent births, or childrearing behavior. For example, women in the experimental group were more likely than those in the control group to become pregnant during the followup period. Children of mothers in

the experimental group were more likely to be in a formal child care arrangement than those of mothers in the control group.

In part, these findings reflect the fact that women in the control group received many of the same services, though to a more limited extent, as women who participated in New Chance. Consequently, the measured effect is only on the difference between the two experiences and not on the set of services that both groups received. The situation of both groups is poor. At eighteen months, 61 percent of the sample had obtained neither a GED nor a high school diploma; 65 percent were neither employed nor in an education or training program; and 82 percent were still on welfare.

New York State Child Assistance Program

Program Description. The New York State Child Assistance Program (CAP) was originally authorized to run in seven counties from October 1988 through March 1994 under waiver authority provided by the Social Security Act. It recently has been extended an additional three years. In four of these counties, all eligible AFDC families could enroll in the program, and in three counties, AFDC cases were randomly assigned to experimental and control groups to study the program's impacts. Those who were in the experimental group were given the opportunity to participate in the program, while those in the control group were not.

Single parents with at least one child of an absent parent could participate in the program on a voluntary basis. The program was designed to overcome obstacles to self-sufficiency seen in the AFDC system. Key differences between CAP and AFDC are summarized below.⁷

AFDC	CAP
• AFDC grant based on budgeting needs for family size. • After work expense deduction, for every dollar earned, AFDC grant reduced a dollar (once \$30 and 1/3 has been used). • Requires cooperation with child support enforcement efforts. • \$50 passthrough of child support. • Resource limit of \$1,000. • Food stamp benefits in coupons. • Earned income disregard for child care expenses. • Income maintenance examiner focuses on eligibility and budgeting.	• CAP grant based on number of CAP-eligible children. • For earnings below the poverty level, for every dollar earned, CAP grant reduced 10 cents; for earnings above the poverty level, for every dollar earned, CAP grant reduced 67 cents. • Requires child support order for each child in CAP grant. • No \$50 passthrough of child support. • No resource limit. • Food stamp benefits in cash. • Child care stipend in advance. • Generic case manager helps family develop economic self-sufficiency.

Because grant levels are based on the number of children in the family who are members of the AFDC case and are covered by a court order for child support, there is a direct financial incentive for the custodial parent to try to establish orders for every child in the family.

Although employment is not mandatory, families with substantial earnings do better under CAP than under AFDC. CAP families remain eligible for benefits until

their incomes reach 150 percent of the poverty level, far beyond the cutoff for AFDC eligibility.

Because CAP participation is voluntary and the program requires most clients to take substantial actions to obtain earnings and child support orders prior to enrollment, AFDC recipients were not expected to participate. Recruitment efforts proved to be necessary and important to convince clients to participate in CAP. In the first two years of the program, 10 percent did enroll. (This percentage is somewhat lower because the experimental design constrained CAP recruitment efforts.) Recipients with some earnings and at least one support order when they entered the program had the highest participation rates. Only 6 percent of clients had both earnings and support orders; 55 percent had at least one support order but no earnings.

Research Findings. Based on two-year followup data, evaluation results show that the program had a significant positive impact on clients' earnings, support orders, and total income. (Impacts are averaged over the entire experimental group, whether or not they actually enrolled in CAP). CAP raised clients' average total earnings by 27 percent, or about \$37 per month. Earnings impacts grew from the first to the second year, but then tended to level off. The difference in earnings between those in the treatment and those in the control group narrowed toward the end of this period.

Although impacts varied considerably among sites because of differences in caseload characteristics and priorities, CAP led to a 25 percent increase in the likelihood that a family would obtain support orders for all children who lacked them. Some of this increase resulted from obtaining orders that would not have been sought without the program and some from clients and case workers pressuring the system to speed up the process for obtaining such orders. The increase in support orders did not, however, result in a statistically significant increase in support payments during the study period. This probably is because the new support orders were for relatively low amounts, reflecting the low income of the absent fathers. The value of these support orders could increase if the fathers' incomes increase.

During the first two years, CAP had no impact on clients' receipt of public assistance, including the amount paid in cash assistance (CAP, AFDC, and Home Relief), food stamp benefits, Medicaid eligibility, Emergency Assistance, and social services for which welfare recipients were eligible during the two years.

During this time, CAP generated clear net financial benefits to clients at a slightly reduced cost to the government. It increased family income 4 percent, or an average of \$41 monthly over the two-year period, and raised the likelihood that family incomes would exceed 125 percent of the poverty level by 18 percent. The net benefit per client was an average \$36 monthly income gain, with increased earnings and changes in assistance benefits essentially cancelling out some of the benefits and average government savings of \$2 per month for each family in the treatment group, resulting from a \$7 per month increase in administrative costs per family and various small increases and reductions in other costs.

In summary, CAP achieved percentage gains in client earnings that equaled or surpassed percentage gains in earnings documented in other employment and training programs over the same period. It did not generate reductions in assistance payments as quickly as most employment and training programs. Yet because its administrative costs were relatively low, CAP paid for itself more quickly.

Endnotes

1. This report draws heavily on the research on welfare to work and related programs conducted by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation and others. The bibliography contains a listing of the publications consulted in preparing the summary.
2. Jan L. Hagen and Irene Lurie, *Implementing JOBS: The Initial Design and Structure of Local Programs* (New York: The Nelson Rockefeller Institute of Government, State University of New York, 1993).
3. As categorized in *From Welfare to Work*, "broad-coverage programs" include the Arkansas WORK Program; Louisville Work Incentive (WIN) Laboratory Experiment-Individual Job Search and Group Job Search; Cook County WIN Demonstration; West Virginia Community Work Experience Program (CWEP); Virginia Employment Services (ESP); San Diego I (Employment Preparation Program/ Experimental Work Experience Program (EPP/EWEP); San Diego Saturation Work Initiative Model (SWIM); and Baltimore Options Program. "Selective-voluntary programs" include the New Jersey on-the-job training (OJT) program, the Maine OJT program, AFDC Homemaker-Home Health Aide Demonstrations; and the National Supported Work Demonstration. "Mixed-strategy programs" include SWIM, the Baltimore Options program, California's Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) program, Florida's Project Independence, and other state JOBS programs. These mixed-strategy programs also are designed as broad-coverage programs.
4. The JOBS evaluation as well as evaluations of pre-JOBS welfare-to-work programs conducted by the Manpower Development Research Corporation and those of the federal Job Training Partnership Act program and New York State's Child Assistance Program are based on random assignment field experiments in which potential program participants are either randomly placed in the program being tested or assigned to a control group. Those in the control group are not eligible to receive special program services, but they are eligible for all other employment and training services in the community as well as for all basic welfare benefits. Program impacts—the added value attributable to the program—are measured by comparing the postprogram experience of those people who participated in the program with the experience of those who did not. In this way, the studies are able to take into account the natural flow of people on and off welfare because of marriage, employment, and other reasons unrelated to any special intervention.

In evaluations of broad-coverage programs in which a proportion of the welfare caseload—usually AFDC applicants and recipients with school-age children—was required to participate in the program as a condition of receiving benefits, program results are measured in terms of their impact on those subject to this mandate, regardless of whether recipients actually participated in employment or education activities. In evaluations of selective-voluntary programs or demonstrations of specific program components, program impacts are measured in terms of the different experiences of those who actually participated in the intervention being studied and those who did not.
5. Members of the control group in the JTPA and JOBSTART evaluations were active in the labor market, while the program participants were more active in program services. Consequently, to achieve a measured program impact, participants first had to make up the loss of foregone earnings they experienced during the time they participated in the program in order to catch up to the control group and then they had to overtake the earnings of the control group.
6. Two programs are being pilot tested to find effective strategies for raising the income of young, noncustodial fathers. The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation is testing Parents' Fair Share in nine states. This program is designed to provide employment and training services and encourage fathers to assume greater responsibility for their children who are on welfare, thereby making child support enforcement a more effective vehicle to reduce poverty. Public/Private Ventures is testing the Young Unwed Fathers Pilot Project in six sites. The program uses the Job Training Partnership Act system to provide young fathers with training, counseling, and ongoing

support over an eighteen-month period to help them obtain good jobs and strengthen their involvement in their children's lives in a positive way.

7. Adapted from Exhibit 1.1: Key Differences Between AFDC and CAP in Hamilton et al., *The New York State Child Assistance Program: Program Impacts, Costs, and Benefits* (Cambridge, Mass.: Abt Associates, 1993).

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